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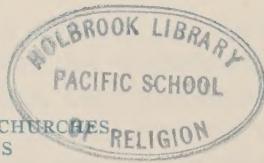
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The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

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August 6, 1948

Amsterdam Special

The Training of Laymen

If the ecumenical movement is as the late Archbishop Temple said, "the great new fact of our day", then the renewal of the Church by means of lay-training could very well be called the great new hope of our day.

Lay training is one of the four concerns of the Churches to be considered at Amsterdam this month. There is a wide-spread interest in this subject as evidenced by the number of lay-training centres which have been developed in the past three years.

The delegates at Amsterdam will not only have before them a special report on lay training as they consider this subject, but there will also be available for them a new eighty-two page resource book on this same subject. This book is entitled "Professional Life as Christian Vocation" and is edited by Mlle Suzanne de Dietrich, resident lecturer at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

Both the report and the book deal not only with the World Council of Churches lay-training centre, the Ecumenical Institute, but with the whole problem of lay training. The book contains twelve lay training projects or programmes in many different countries.

The report suggests that there must be a "clear theology about the place which the layman, the ordinary church member, has in the life of the Church". The fact is also emphasised that "in most congregations, to say nothing of the higher church bodies, it is the clergy who dominate, with the laymen assuming, frequently from habit and therefore unwittingly, an all but passive role". The Church must come to the realisation and that right soon that "it is through the laity that the Church meets the problems of the world; it is through the laity that these problems will find a Christian solution".

Three basic issues are to be considered in dealing with this matter of laymen: 1) the training of laymen; 2) the responsibility of laymen; and 3) ways and means of such lay training. The report also presents three questions

with particular reference to the responsibility of the World Council of Churches in the field of laymen: 1) Should further and continuing work be undertaken by the Council in regard to the total problem as it exists within the Churches? 2) In what ways and to what degree should laymen be engaged in the general work of the Council? 3) In what ways should the programme carried out by the Ecumenical Institute be developed?

It can be expected that the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches will give new and increased impetus to what Dr Hendrik Kraemer, director of the Ecumenical Institute, calls a programme for "the renewal of the Churches" and what Dr Visser 't Hooft designates as "attacking the world from the inside".

E.P.S.Geneva

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CHINA

Dr Daniel Nelson's Tragic Death

Dr Daniel Nelson, relief director in China for the Lutheran World Federation, his wife and their two children, were among the 25 persons who died when a flying boat crashed off the coast of southern China.

Dr Nelson is the third member of his family to die a violent death in the Orient. His father, the first American Lutheran missionary to enter China, in 1890, died in 1926, the victim of a stray bullet during the Chinese Civil War. A brother, also a missionary, was killed by Communists in 1932 after being held a prisoner for two years. All three were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, formerly the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

Dr Nelson wrote a new chapter in the history of foreign missions when he pioneered missionary aviation in China. In July of 1946 he purchased a C-47 transport from the United States Army, christened it the "St Paul.", and used the plane to break the bottleneck in the transportation of missionaries and supplies to and from stations in various parts of China. He was president of the World Missionary Aviation Conference.

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES

Ecclesiastical Statistics

According to the annual report compiled by "The Christian Herald" (New York), national interdenominational monthly, church membership stands at 53% of the population, "the highest in the United States' history". The total number of persons allied to religious bodies - Protestant and non-Protestant - stood at 77,386,186 at the end of 1947, a gain of 3,713,006 over 1946 (see E.P.S. No. 24, 1947).

Of this total, 223 Protestant denominations have a membership of 46,149,676, or a little more than 60%. Roman Catholic membership was 25,286,178 as of January 1, 1947 - a little more than 33%. (Later Catholic statistics report 26,075,697 Catholics in the United States).

The Jewish congregations, "for whom we have had no new figure since 1936", last listed 4,641,000 - or about 6%. The remaining 1% is divided between

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such bodies as the Greek and Russian Orthodox (300,000 each), Polish National Catholic (250,000), International General Assembly of Spiritualists (150,000), and others.

Commenting on these statistics, the "Herald" said: "America is still preponderantly Protestant, and is likely to remain so for a long while. But what do the figures tell about comparative gains made last year? Just this: percentage-wise, the Roman Catholics made a somewhat better gain than the Protestants". The Roman Catholic Church made a gain of a little better than 3.5%. Protestantism reported a little more than 2.6%.

The largest growth among Protestant denominations was enjoyed by the following Churches; Methodist (8,567,772 in 1947 as against 8,430,146 in 1946); Southern Baptist Convention (6,270,207/6,079,305); Presbyterian USA (2,234,798/2,174,530); Protestant Episcopal (2,160,207/2,118,980); United Lutheran Church in America (1,778,943/1,748,183); Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1,469,213/1,422,513); Congregational Christians (1,157,764/1,140,824).

The largest growth was enjoyed by church bodies with memberships ranging from 200,000 to 1,000,000 and not by the small sects. E.P.S. Geneva

U.S.S.R.The Results of the Church Congress in Moscow

Contradictory reports have been published in the world press concerning the results of the Church Congress in Moscow (see E.P.S. No. 29 and 30). These reports are also inadequate.

The "Religious News Service" (New York), in its number of July 21st, included a report from Moscow which stated that the Assembly had resolved to enter into close relationships with the Anglican and Protestant Churches all over the world. "The Patriarchs and Exarchs, attending a Pan-Orthodox Conference called by Moscow Patriarch Alexei, agreed that the Protestant Churches - especially the Anglican - follow canons and rites similar to those of Orthodoxy which establish a basis for understanding between them. It was not announced whether the Russian Church or the Orthodox Churches affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate would send representatives or observers to the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, next month."

On July 23rd the Tass Agency in Moscow published the news that the Churches represented at the Congress had refused to cooperate in the World Assembly at Amsterdam. Tass is probably only giving an extract from the resolutions, and cannot therefore be regarded as complete. The declaration, from which the news was circulated in the world press, runs as follows - according to the Russian weekly "Les Nouvelles Russes" (Paris, July 30):

"The subjects under discussion at the Church Congress in Moscow were the following: a) the Vatican and the Orthodox Church; 2) the ecumenical movement and the Orthodox Church; c) the hierarchy of the Anglican Church; d) the Church calendar.

"With regard to the first question, a unanimous resolution was adopted, condemning the active rôle of the Vatican in stirring up another war and in the whole political struggle with world democracy. The resolution states that the Popes in Rome 'have always made friends with the powerful in this world' and have taken action against the weak and exploited. Today the Vatican is still working against the interests of the workers. 'The Vatican is the centre of intrigues against the interests of the peoples, especially the Slav peoples; it is the centre of international Fascism'. 'All Christians, without distinction of nationality or confession, must brand this policy of the Vatican as anti-Christian, anti-democratic and anti-national'.

"The resolution emphasises that the Congress draws a sharp distinction between the Catholic hierarchy with the Pope at its head, and the mass of Catholic believers, who are innocent of the crimes committed by the Vatican.

"With regard to the attitude of the Orthodox Church to the so-called ecumenical movement, the Congress unanimously opposed participation in the First Assembly arranged in August 1948 by the temporary headquarters of the ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches, in as much as the aims pursued by this movement are mainly political and anti-democratic and not ecclesiastical.

"At the same time the Church Congress drew up a 'Message to Christians all over the world', containing an appeal to struggle for peace against the instigators of war.

"Resolutions were passed on the same lines concerning the other points on the agenda.

"All the resolutions were signed by Alexei, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia; Kallistrat, Patriarch-Catholico of Georgia; Gavrilo, Patriarch of Serbia; Justinian, Patriarch of Roumania; Stephen, Exarch of Bulgaria, Metropolitan of Sofia; Alexander, Metropolitan of Emessa in the name of the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria and Antioch (based on a special authority from the Patriarchs Christophoros and Alexander); Paisij, Bishop of the Albanian Church; Timothy, Archbishop of Bielostock and Belsk in the name of the Polish Church; Eleutherius, Archbishop of Prague, in the name of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia."

From the above declaration it is clear that the representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and of the Greek Orthodox Church took only part in the Jubilee celebrations, and were not present at the discussions.

In addition E.P.S. has received the following details about the 500th year Jubilee celebrations and the Church Congress. The two functions terminated in a service which lasted two and a half hours in the Trinity Cathedral at Sagorsk (about 50 kilometres from Moscow), followed by a dinner in the refectory which was formerly the dining-hall of the Russian Tsars in the 17th century when they visited the Patriarch. Finally the guests and assembly delegates visited the tomb of Tikhon, the first Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church after the Revolution who died in 1925 and is buried in the Donskoi cemetery in Moscow. More than 10,000 people could not get into the packed Cathedral for the closing service.

The sessions of the Congress, which ended on July 18, were incorporated in the Jubilee programme. So on July 8 and 9, the Congress took the reports of Russian theologians in relation to the above-mentioned matters on the agenda. From July 13 to 16, after three days' interruption, the Congress resumed its work, dividing into four commissions. On July 17 these commissions presented their findings to a plenary session, and these were incorporated in the resolutions which were drawn up on the same evening.

Before leaving Moscow the delegates visited Leningrad, Kiev and Tbilisi.
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The Syrian Church of India and the Russian Patriarchal Church

In one of its last numbers the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" published a long article, describing the affiliation of the Syrian Church of India to the Russian Orthodox Church. According to a news-item appearing in "The Christian Century" (Chicago, July 21, 1948) by P. Oonman Philip, the Syrian Church referred to can only be that section of it which is under the Jacobite Syrian Patriarch who lives at Homs in Syria, who took part in the Church Congress in Moscow (see E.P.S.Nos 29 and 30).

About thirty years ago this foreign Patriarch made the claim that he exercised complete spiritual and temporal authority over the Syrian Church in India. A large majority of members of the Church in India, with the bishops and clergy, resisted his claims and later organised an independent Eastern Church, now known as the Orthodox Syrian Church of Malabar. It elects its own Indian Catholicos, who has Indian bishops under him. That section of the Syrian Church which still acknowledges the authority of the Patriarch at Homs is known as the Jacobite Syrian Church of Malabar. It has foreign bishops sent in by the Patriarch, as well as Indian bishops. According to inquiries made in India, the leaders of both sections of the Syrian Church declare that they have not heard of any such alliance with the Russian Church in Moscow. E.P.S. Geneva

SWITZERLAND

International Conference of Christians and Jews

The International Council of Christians and Jews, which has its headquarters in Geneva, recently organised an international conference held at Fribourg, Switzerland, from July 21 to 30, 1948. The purpose of the Council is to bring together men of good will who are members of the Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish faiths, in order to promote - through the common moral principles which united them - a new era based on respect for other people's convictions, and to establish fruitful collaboration between Jews and Christians to struggle against intolerance and racial prejudice.

The conference was attended by about a hundred delegates from over 15 different countries: 33% were Roman Catholics, 33% Protestants, 20% Jews and 14% of no definite religious confession. The Chairman was Dr Henry Noble Mac Cracken, of New York, one of three honorary presidents of the International Council. The opening speech was made by the President of the Council, Mr. R. Everett Clinchy.

The most important of the resolutions were as follows: an appeal to the forthcoming Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, asking the Churches to take a positive part in the struggle against anti-Semitism; a declaration concerning the State of Israel in Palestine; and a declaration on the necessity of discovering practical ways of abolishing the causes of misunderstanding and intolerance in the countries where anti-Semitism or religious persecution are gaining ground.

E.P.S.Geneva

KENYA

Church Cooperation

The Christian Council of Kenya is made up of representative's of the Diocese of Mombasa, of the Church of Scotland and its associated African Church, the Methodist Missionary Society with its associated Church, the Salvation Army, the Friends Africa Mission, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, the National Holiness Missionary Association, the Church Missionary Society, and the Bible Church Missionary Society. In certain matters it has associated with it the two sections of the Africa Inland Mission and also the Church of God Mission.

In a report on its activities the Christian Council of Kenya points out that, in order to avoid the building of several small chapels, the plans for the construction of new towns will provide for an adequate church plot to be held by the C.C.K. and used by all denominations which can agree to use one building. The schools in townships will be run by joint committees on which Government and the Churches will be represented and wasteful competition avoided.

The Council is inter-racial as well as inter-denominational. Although progress in this sphere has not been as rapid as was hoped, there has been a great improvement in understanding and collaboration. During the war, the Council looked after the Church in an area formerly evangelised by a German Mission and was able to arrange for that Church to be supervised by one of the larger Missionary Societies. Through the other Churches the Council raised the necessary funds to keep the orphaned one on its feet and thus linked it closer with the ecumenical movement.

The report concludes: "Discussions on Church Order lie outside the sphere of the Council's activities, but our discussions on other matters, leading as they frequently do to common action, draw us together in spirit and some of us dare to hope that we shall one day see a Union of the Churches in East Africa."

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Dr Laubach on the Results of his Teaching System

Dr Frank C. Laubach, the well-known missionary and pioneer literacy expert, has returned to New York on July 19, 1948, after a nine months tour through eleven African countries (see E.P.S. No. 15). Dr Laubach told a press conference that more than 250,000,000 illiterates throughout the world have learned to read by using the phonetic method which he advocates. Literacy classes in 63 different African languages and dialects were established by Dr Laubach during his journey. In 20 years as a missionary educator, he has taught people in 156 different languages to read.

According to Dr Laubach, the basic principle of his system is the association of pictures, words and syllables. His method - similar in many respects to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese characters - uses charts and graphs which depict objects or ideas through pictures of familiar objects. The average illiterate can learn to read his native tongue in about two weeks. At the end of the first learning period, the illiterate is given a diploma in recognition of his progress, and introduced to a primer or reader which contains a 1,600-word "recognition vocabulary". This list embraces about 90% of all the words the pupil will encounter in his native tongue. Once the pupil is familiar with Dr Laubach's teaching method, he is urged to teach someone else. This "chain-letter" method of instruction has greatly accelerated the literacy rate among world populations.

During his African tour Dr Laubach was asked to establish literacy programmes at a Firestone Rubber Company plantation in Liberia for 30,000 native employees, another for subjects of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and a third for the subjects of King Farouk of Egypt. In Mexico last year, the Government taught over one million people to read by their own adaptation of the Laubach method.

Dr Laubach has been invited by the Government of Siam to spend two and a half months of next year establishing a literacy programme in that country. He also plans to visit Korea, Australia and New Guinea in 1949.

Dr Laubach's work is sponsored by the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

"Christendom Prepares for Amsterdam"

A little booklet bearing the above title has just been published in Berlin, in spite of many technical difficulties, concerning the origin and growth of the ecumenical movement, which will receive fresh stimulation from the forthcoming World Assembly of Churches in Amsterdam - a new milestone in its history.

The purpose of the author, Pastor Brennecke, was "to give the Churches a little help in understanding Amsterdam". His short but exhaustive book is dedicated to his fellow-workers in the World's Student Christian Federation, to its President Dr W.A. Visser 't Hooft, and to its General Secretary, the Rev. Robert Mackie. It culminates in the following confession:

"The Church has only one task: that of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Lord, the Kyrios, in the world and throughout the world. This proclamation is the Una Sancta in its perfection. Where it is realised, we may already speak today of the one Church in the churches. Where it was realised, the unity of the Church has existed ever since the days of the Early Christians. It points towards the last Day, which we all await in faith, when Christ will set up His Kingdom before the eyes of all people."

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